Identification of Travel Circuits

*225. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to identify some travel circuits in the country on an annual basis and develop them to international standards;

(b) if so, the circuits identified; and

(c) the amount earmarked and the progress made in each case?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Department of Tourism has sanctioned development works in following seven tourist circuit during the year 2002-03:

(Rs. in Lakhs)

Sl. No.	Tourist Circuit	Amount sanctioned	Amount Released	Remarks
1.	Vaishali-Nalanda-Rajgir-Bodhgaya Varanasi	800.00	800.00	Utilisation Certificate awaited
2.	Chandigarh-Kullu Manali-Lahaul/Spiti Leh (Route I & II)	723.00	723.00	-do-
3.	Gwalior-Shivpuri-Chanderi-Orcha-Khajuraho-Jhansi-Bhopal-Sanchi Bhimbetka-Pachmarhi-Kanha-Jabalpur-(Bhedaghat)	508.82	508.82	-do-
4.	Bombay-Alibagh (Mandva)-Ganapatipule-Vijaydurg-Mithibad-Kunkeshwar-Mochetmad-Sindhudurg-Tarkarli-Shiroda-Savantwadi-Amboli Goa-Coastal-Karnataka-Bekal.	800.51	800.51	-do-
5.	Cochin-Kumarakom (Backwaters)-Kottayam-Quilon-Trivandrum (Kerala)	780.36	780.36	-do-
6.	Shillong-Guwahati-Kaziranga-Tezpur Bhalakpung-Tawang(Arunachal Pradesh)-Majuli-Sibsagar-Kohima	542.00	542.00	-do-
7.	Jaipur-Jodhpur-Jaisalmer-Bikaner-Shekhawati-Jaipur	644.00	644.00	-do-

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, the question was: what are the travel circuits which the Government has, and what the Government is doing to maintain these circuits, or tourist spots to match the international standards? The reply, which has been circulated to us, mentioned about seven circuit, mentions somewhere Rs. 800 crores, somewhere Rs. 700 crores, somewhere Rs. 500 crores, etc., for each circuit as 'amount sanctioned', and says that the entire amount has been released. But all seven circuits have an identical answer that 'there is no report yet with the Ministry as to how these amounts have been utilised, and for what purpose they have been utilised, Sir, tourism is one of the major industries, major sources of foreign exchange earnings for so many countries of the world, and there is no reason why India should not be among the foremost countries in this list. But, as the Minister would no doubt appreciate, Sir, that the international standards require a very high level of monitoring, special apparatus to keep that monitoring and that vigil around 24 hours. When we do not have a report on how the sanctioned money, which was released, has been spent, how we can achieve it. Therefore, I would like to ask the Minister whether there is any apparatus which constantly monitors the upkeep, the cleanliness, the drinking water available facilities, the guides facilities, etc. in these circuits. People come to tourist places more for relaxation, not only to make us earn but to have a certain peace of mind for them. My question is: What is the apparatus which keep the Minister and the Ministry informed that all these circuits are being maintained at international levels?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Previously, Sir, once the sanction was issued, the matter was left to the State Governments. But, now, we have revised our policy. We are ourselves monitoring the sanction, and quite a lot of work is being done by us directly, and in all these areas where projects have been sanctioned, the work is already on; and, the minimum period for them is thirty months usually. But we would like to finish them within one year, and the work is on. I will give you the progress report of any particular thing about which you want to know. There are large regions, and a number of works are on, some from the Archaeology Department, some from the Tourism Department, and some from the Culture Department. I will give you all the details if you want about a particular area of a particular chapter.

About the standards, we are very conscious of this fact, and we are already maintaining international standards, and the regulations are on. We want to enforce them but as I mentioned, tourism is a civilizational issue. It is not merely an issue which we can administer directly. It depends on the attitude of the people, the value system in the society. Now, for example, if a person comes at the airport and the way the taxi driver deals with him, or the way the policeman deals with him, or the other private people deal with him, how the city is cleaned, how health is taken care of, he forms an impression about all that. There are many other areas, which are not within our control. But, we have formulated a policy in which all the elements of tourism, all the elements of culture, all the elements of a clean civic life are synthesized and then a product is produced.

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, we are all aware of the fact that there are several tourist offices open around the globe. I want to ask the hon. Minister, more specifically, whether some such tourist offices have been closed in recent times; and about those, which are still operating, is there any assessment done as to how they are able to popularise, sell, market these tourist circuits which you have written about? What is the assessment as to whether the tourism department or the tourist office is justifying the expense incurred on it by the increased number of tourists coming from that particular country?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Yes, Sir. There are 13 offices which we have got outside. And Five offices were closed down because of a decrease in the number of tourists from Brazil, and other things; there was not much traffic there. The situation was reviewed last year, and if they were not productive, they were not used.

Now, we have got a policy which we call the 'Look East Policy' and under that, we are now opening new offices in Beijing, Bangkok and Malaysia. Therefore, there will be three more new offices in those areas from where we have a lot of potential for tourism.

Now, so far as the question as to how many tourists are coming is concerned, the tourists traffic depends on various factors, for instance, the September 9/11 attack, SARS, and many others. But in spite of all that, during the last six months, our tourist traffic from foreign countries has increased by 12 per cent. India is one of the very few countries in the world, which has shown an increase during such

adverse circumstances. And I am not only emphasising international tourism, but also domestic tourism, which is the real engine of growth. You will be very happy to note that during the last one year, there has been an increae of as much as three crore tourists within the country. Everyday, I find a large number of people going to Rishikesh and Chardham and Kurushetra, which we are improving, and coming back in the evening. They are not even counted as domestic tourists because, under the statistics, if you were to stay only for the night, if we were to consider it only for the night, even then, there is an increase of two to three crores in one year, which is a very good indication of our economic advancement through tourism.

श्री एस॰ एस॰ अहलूवालिया: सभापति महोदय, वैसे तो टूरिज्म के बारे में मंत्री जी बता रहे थे कि भारत में टूरिज्म की बहुत बढ़ोतरी हुई है। स्थानीय भाषा में अगर समझाया जाए तो टूरिज्म को सैर सपाटा मंत्रालय कहना चाहिए और इसमें पुरानी सभ्यता के पुरातन चिह्न, ऐतिहासिक स्थान, धार्मिक स्थान और सांस्कृतिक चीजों से जुड़े स्थानों का ध्यान रखना चाहिए। मैं मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि कश्मीर सर्किट जो वे बनाने जा रहे है, वहां पर वे हजरतबल और चिनार-ए-शरीफ का ख्याल रखेंगें, उसके साथ साथ उत्तर भारत के हरिद्वार और गया के रूप में जाने वाले मटन, खीर-भवानी, छेवी-पातशाही का गुरूद्वारा और शंकराचार्य के बारे में भी ख्याल रखेंगें या नहीं? जरा सदन को इसके बारे में बताने की कृपा करें।

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, I would like to respond to what he calls 'sair sapata'. In fact, we are taking tourism as a very serious business and we are having three components, in which we have taken the initiative.

श्री सभापति: अपनी-अपनी एप्रोच है।

SHRI JAGMOHAN: I wish to say that our first aim is to treat tourism as an instrument of healthy and positive economic advancement and sustainable development. The second is to make our cultural places very clean and neat so that the image of India as a great country comes out. Thirdly, we want to bring before the world what great pieces of architecture and art we have so that they can understand why the world called India once as a 'mother of civilisation. These are the three basic objectives which we have in view-economic as well as the present requirements, and then, you know, just brining about a new awakening in the country about our own cultural heritage.

About Kashmir circuit, we have already sanctioned Rs. 10 crores under the Kashmir package in this year. It is not one of those circuits which is

already indicated. This is a new circuit under issue at present and *Sacchi Paatshahi* is included in that. Mattan is also included. I have already indicated that. Baba *Rishi* and *Aishmukam* are also included in that.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to commend the Minister the dynamic Minister, for carrying on the work that I began 36 years ago, when the Ministry was first formed. Is the Minister aware that there is a fabulous circuit in Tamil Nadu which involves Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur, In Madurai, you have the glorious Meenakshi temple, in Tiruchirapalli you have the Sri Rangathan temple and in Thanjavur you have the Brihadeeswarar temple. The Shakta, the Shaiva and the Vaishnava—the three great streams of Hindu culture—are available in this circuit. Will the hon. Minister be pleased to tell us whether special attention is being paid to develop this great tourist and spiritual circuit in Tamil Nadu.

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, about Tamil Nadu, I must tell you that it is such a rich depository of culture and ancient heritage that we have already developed a circuit which is around Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram and Kanyakumari. In the second phase, we are taking up this area including Thanjavur. We will probably do it this year.

New LPG agencies in Uttar Pradesh

†*226. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of gas agencies functioning in Uttar Pradesh;

(b) whether Government have received any proposals for the opening of more gas agencies; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Pubic Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) were operating 938 LPG distributorships as on 1.7.2003 in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

(b) & (c) Government receive various representations for setting up of more LPG distributorships from time to time. OMCs have been

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.